

February 3, 2010

Allan Rock,  
President of the University of Ottawa  
75 Laurier Avenue E  
Ottawa, ON  
K1N 6N5

To President Allan Rock,

Your administration has declared war on students. Repeatedly, politically active members of the student community have been subjected to illegitimate sanctions on their academic and political freedom. The Ottawa Police Service has been regularly abused in an effort to intimidate students in to silence. The violence of your administration's attacks has reached a new intensity.

On February 2, 2010, Protection was called to the office of the Student Appeal Centre to verify the presence of politically active student, Marc Kelly. Upon arrival, protection services notified SAC Officer Mireille Gervais of their intent to remove Kelly from the room and campus. They proceeded to call the Ottawa Police to the campus to arrest the student. Upon arrival, the police officers are notified of the SFUO's lease of the SAC offices.

The offices of the Student Federation of the University of Ottawa are spaces legally occupied by the SFUO. The Student Appeal Centre is a service offered by the Student Federation and thus the office is leased by the SFUO. Students have the right of passage to the properties of their Student Federation. No permission was given to the Police Officers to enter the office and they did not produce a warrant for entry. Their entry in to the SAC was an illegal action committed in violation of the rights of students and the student Federation.

Members of the SFUO present at the office of the SAC informed the officers their intent to procure the lease documents proving the space was under the jurisdiction of the SFUO and not the University of Ottawa. Under the false instruction of Legal Counsel to the University of Ottawa, the Police then violated the Trespass Property Act by entering the office and arresting Kelly. The police also prevented Gervais to enter the office she legally occupied while the arrest was taking place. Too late, Seamus Wolfe, President of the SFUO arrived with the lease documents and proceeded to ask the remaining Police Sergeant why he had not waited for the documents before committing the arrest.

The President of the Student Federation was arrested after procuring the SFUO's lease documents that verified their legal occupancy of the space. Wolfe was then charged with "disturbing the peace by swearing." This charge immediately brings to mind one question: WHAT THE FUCK?

This is a clear abuse of the law to punish students for exercising their democratic right to question the police forces of Canada. Seamus Wolfe was defending the rights of students to access the facilities of their very own unions. His arrest is at once a sign of disrespect to the rights of students to meet their representatives and the rights of citizens to free speech.

The nature of Wolfe's arrest was also disturbing. He expressed disbelief in the arrest and placed his hands behind his back to allow the officer to place cuffs around his wrists. The officer ignored Wolfe's compliance and bent him over in to a painful position. This display of unnecessary physical abuse, no less toward the President of the Student Federation, is absolutely intolerable.

A student who witnessed the incident was also threatened by the Sergeant with arrest when he began to inform other students of the situation. This leads me to believe that no student on this campus can feel safe when speaking freely.

I call upon you, Allan Rock, to put a stop to this unacceptable affront to the fundamental rights and freedoms of students and citizens and to the principles of democracy. You must publicly declare that students will no longer be terrorized by the thuggish actions of the Ottawa Police and Protection Services. Specifically, you must instruct Protection Services never to use the Trespass Property Act, to suppress political action on campus. You must formally recognize that SFUO offices belong to and are managed by students. You must respect the fact that the University cannot decide who can or cannot access these spaces. Refusal to do so will be taking an anti-student position.

The University of Ottawa campus is no place for police, this aggression will not be tolerated.

Liam Kennedy-Slaney,  
University of Ottawa Student